

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, May 21, 1894, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Volta Bureau, Washington, D. C. May 21st, 1894. My darling Mabel:

Where are you? What are you doing? Why have you not telegraphed — or sent Halifax address? I fear you will not receive my telegrams till after your return to Baddeck.

The operation was performed today, on your Mamma's eye — very skilfully — and successfully — by Dr. Barnett. Dr. Kerr and another doctor were present — also a nurse. Little Gardiner plead with Dr. Barnett to be allowed to be present to see what he did to Grandmama. He allowed it, so Gardiner sat on his mother's knee during the whole time. Gipsy too was present — with her Grandpapa. And I also — watched the proceedings from the door.

Your Mamma lay on the sofa — and Dr. Barnett sat on the edge of the sofa — instruments and etc., being on small round table — Rest grouped around as shown above.

Before the doctors arrived the nurse I believe had applied cocaine — and your Mamma lay on the sofa with her eye bound up waiting for arrival of Dr. Barnett.

When the doctors arrived the eye was unbound and examined. Dr. Barnett touched the surface of the eye with some instruments to be sure that it was thoroughly under the influence of the cocaine. Finding it quite in-sensitive to pain — he told your Mamma to look up — so that the whites of the eyes were exposed below. He then made a free incision in the lower part of the eye — through which he carefully extracted the lens of the eye. Your Mamma lay perfectly quiet and did not make a sound — 2 until it was all over — when she said “Gardiner dear — I have had no pain at all.”

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The doctors pronounced it “an ideal operation.” There were so many things that might have happened but did not. Everything points to complete success. The operation was performed about half-past one o'clock.

I telegraphed yesterday to Mr. Westervelt that I thought we should not ask your father to leave his wife just now on account of the A.A.P.T.S.D. — and suggested that the meeting should be held here. This morning a telegram has come that the meeting is to be held here Wednesday morning at my house. Hackett will open the house tomorrow — and I will see what I can do to provide boarding places near at hand.

At three o'clock this afternoon I met Prof. Langley at the B. & O. Depot — and we went on to Baltimore together to see Major Powell at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. The operation on the stump of the arm has been very successful — and he has now hope of complete relief from suffering. He was very glad to see us. I telephoned Twin Oaks a short time ago and found that your Mother was very comfortable — everything seemed to be going on well. I am troubled about you my darling. You have evidently not received my telegrams — or we should have heard from you by telegraph today. I am sorry I did not prevail upon you to come to New York. Hope you have been satisfied with the Halifax doctor. Please telegraph on receipt of this exactly how you are.

Your loving husband, Alec.